

**Origin and  
History  
of the  
Jartown S. D.  
No. 1856**

**With  
Reminiscences  
1903 - 1948**

**By  
Arthur Elson**

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**FARTOWN SCHOOL PUPILS 1938**—Back Row, Left to right: Marie Turtle, Ivy Harris, Mary Noyes, Winnie Rowbottom, Marjorie Sharpe, Jean Fryer, Miss Peggy Wilson, teacher; Second row: Frank Rowbottom, Allan Noyes, Hayden Elson, Joe Noyes, Bob Turtle, Bill Chapman; Front row—Shibley, Bernard Elson, Douglas Harris and Gavin Elson.

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**Arthur Elson**

First Chairman and Trustee  
for Three Years and Secretary-  
Treasurer for the Subsequent  
Thirty-Nine Years—a Total of  
42 Years' Service.

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# FOREWORD

**W**ITH the inevitable passing of our "Old Timers" it does seem fitting that someone should commit to paper the origin and subsequent events which comprise the history and progress of the community within the territory known as the Fartown School District, No. 1856, of Saskatchewan.

Of the original pioneers, and by that I mean those settlers who homesteaded and settled here before the advent of the railway, only Mr. Sam Noyes and myself and wife remain; while of the children of that period, Mrs. Sam Noyes, Joe Firth and Dan Lucas are the only ones left in the territory which comprised our original school district. Some few years later the row of four sections on our west side were allotted to us, and that, of course, brought in that old stalwart and everybody's friend, Mr. W. T. Page and son, Walter. This is indeed a very small remnant of those who had founded the community, covering a territory four miles north to south, and six miles east to west; a block of 24 sections, and it is some indication that it is high time someone put into writing the doings of those eventful days.

Seeing that I was one of the prime movers in the formation of the school district, was the first chairman, and trustee for three years, and then secretary-treasurer for the subsequent 39 years, it is perhaps fitting that I should undertake the work, although my health and advancing years may be some detriment to the task. However, memory is still fairly efficient, and I hope to be able to make this a real history of our School District; to bring back many pleasant memories, and, at least, to make it interesting to late comers, and our present day school pupils.

## DEDICATION

I WOULD, with all humility, like to dedicate this little booklet to the very dear wives and mothers of those strenuous pioneer days, not only to those of our own district, but also to those of every such pioneer district throughout the West. Our womenfolk were the true pioneers, for it was their tremendous courage, devotion and cheerful uncomplaining attitude that made the settlement of these western plains possible; coming, as so many of them did, from good homes and circumstances in the Old Land, to a new country and territory, wild and undeveloped, they had to make their own homes, new friends and neighbours, often miles apart, and all this under the most primitive conditions.

Their homes were log or sod shacks with their sod roofs, which would leak with every little shower, but in those days it usually rained for three days outside, and for a week inside! Lucky was the woman who had brought more than one umbrella, with which she could protect some one or more treasured possession within the shack.

Yes, we owe a lot to our womenfolk of those days of hardship and privation. They were the inspiration that spurred us to greater effort, and caused us to hold on through adversity, and win the way to success. No matter if the crop met with disaster, or some other adverse circumstances turned up, there was always "Next year." Yes, indeed, they were the true pioneers, and I am happy to be able to pay them this small tribute.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Origin and Settlement

THE Fartown District, of course, had its origin in the coming of the "Barr Colonists", that intrepid band of immigrants from the "Old Land", who, inspired by the Barr pamphlet, and the glowing advertisements of transportation companies, and spurred on by the urge to possess land of their own, who braved all the trials and difficulties of settlement, in a new and undeveloped land, 200 miles from the nearest railway facilities.

It was late in the year of 1902 that the Reverend I. M. Barr issued his famous pamphlet outlining his scheme for an all "British Colony" in the Canadian North West.

Headed thus:—

### BRITISH SETTLEMENT IN NORTH WESTERN CANADA

On Free Grant Lands

### CANADA FOR THE BRITISH

The pamphlet set out the object as being —

"To organize a large body of British people of the right kind—English Scotch and Irish—to form a settlement on free grant Government lands on the prairies of North West Canada.."

The pamphlet at the present time is quite interesting reading.

Certainly the pamphlet did not minimise the difficulties, hardships and privations that might or would be encountered during the early days of the settlement, and it did appeal in some ways to the "Spirit of Empire" which seems ever present in the hearts of British people.

One story has it, that when an early visitor to the Colony asked a group of settlers: "Why did you come out to Canada?" A burly cockney immediately replied, "Why to claim her for the blooming hempire!"

The pamphlet speaks much of the destination as likely to be Edmonton, but evidently this was eventually changed to Saskatoon—then a mere hamlet on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River.

Five trains brought the Colonists across the continent to this hamlet



of Saskatoon, and it was from there that the single trail led for 200 miles west into the land of the setting sun. It was this single trail that the party had travelled over 4500 miles to find.

The heartbreaks of that 200 miles of trail through an unsettled wilderness in the spring of the year are now but memories to those that are left. The inexperienced drivers, with their oxen and loaded wagon, stuck in a mud hole or slough are now events to be laughed at by "old timers" but perseverance and the "will to see it through" brought these intrepid pioneers through to the promised land.

The Reverend Barr and his leadership brought much trouble and tribulation to the colonists and he soon had to make his presence scarce and high tail it back east over the trail. However, there is one thing that Barr did which will live forever—he did bring them to a big domain of rich soil and magnificent pasturage.

Immense stretches of plain and great areas of park land covered the territory, which was intersected by the mighty North Saskatchewan River and its greatest tributary, the Battle River. Many smaller streams along with many lakes, both fresh and alkaline, dotted its broad surface.

This, then, was the promised land, and to those who stayed with it, it has been the means of a pleasant life, some measure of prosperity, and a real home.

With the exit of the Reverend Barr and under the leadership of the Reverend Exton Lloyd many of the difficulties that had arisen were straightened out or were erased and things began to prosper. In a few years the colony was making a name for itself in the farming world. Soon these artisans and craftsmen from the Old Land were exhibiting the results of their labour against the best on the continent, and not only exhibiting, but also winning in grains, grasses, horses and cattle. Thus the colony which at one time looked certain to be a failure, not only turned out to be a success but excelled in everything it undertook and took second place to no one.

Here let me tell the story of one sturdy pioneer family (the Hill family) who met with hardship and privation much as many another colonist did who with all too little in the way of equipment and no previous farming experience, nevertheless entered for and won the much coveted Colorado Silver Cup (a trophy standing over three feet in height) for the best exhibit of oats grown on the North American Con-


tinient. Three years in succession against the stiffest competition that could be gleaned up and launched against them, from growers all over the United States, they won, and defended this wonderful trophy—**WON IT OUTRIGHT**, and for keeps, beating everything that could be brought against them.

The troubles and trials of those early years were many and divergent some serious, some comic, and some few tragic. Get any old timer to talk and he will entertain you with stories of mishaps which occurred to himself or to some one or other of his neighbours; incidents which, looking back, are now something to laugh about, but at the time were far from being a laughing matter. Many situations arose which, if they could be recorded, would sure make interesting reading. Many of them occurred on freighting trips to and from Saskatoon or Edmonton. All our needs, of course, had to be freighted from these points, over the trail and mostly by oxen.

Under these conditions stores would sometimes run out of some line of merchandise. The writer can recall what he believes to be the worst two weeks of his life, when the stores were out of salt, and he and his family had to go without for that period. Only a small thing you will say, but just try it for a couple of weeks and you will find it real punishment to do absolutely without this necessity of life.

Another incident that I can recall was when an endeavour was made to float a scowload of flour down the Saskatchewan River from Edmonton. Owing to low water not much progress was made, and soon the scow was stuck tight on a sand bar at Paradis Crossing. This caused a long delay, and eventually had to be freighted over the trail from that point. When the flour did come in and we got our supply, we found that much of it had become familiar with the river water, so much so that when we emptied a 98 pound bag, the bag would still stand upright and weighed as much as 25 pounds! We would turn the bag and peel this off, and the dog and chickens got good food for a day or two anyway.

There were many incidents of this kind which on occasion caused more or less hardship to some individual or family. And speaking of food does remind me how at times we did have to make shift on rather slim rations, but after the first summer we did have plenty of vegetables to help us through. Meat was cheap enough, but dollars were scarce.



Consequently at times the shot gun was brought into use for there was plenty of meat flying around, and one did not always give a thought as to when the shooting season opened.

One occasion that I remember was when Bill Wicker had run out of meat and his last piece of butter had been used up at breakfast time. The prospect for dinner was just dry bread and potatoes, unless he went out and shot a prairie chicken. That is just what Bill did, although it was the closed season, being still in July. Came dinner time, and potatoes, bread and pot of tea were on the table and the pan with the prairie chicken done to a turn was still on the stove. Just as Bill was lifting the pan one of the Lloydminster detachment of the N. W. M. P. passed the window. Quick as a flash Bill slipped the pan into the oven. Looking in at the door the policeman said "Ah, just right for dinner—I am as hungry as a hunter." Bill did some quick thinking and said, "Sorry, but I have neither meat nor butter, so it is just bread and potatoes today." Says the Mountie, "That is O.K. I am hungry enough for anything." However, as they sat down at the table, he said, "Ering the prairie chicken out of the oven, Bill, it smells real good, and a fellow needs a little meat anyhow." So they did have a good dinner after all, even though it was the closed season on chicken shooting.

The slow moving oxen did much to make possible the development of these western plains, both in the matter of breaking the prairie sod on the farm, and in the freighting of supplies. It is true that the driver had to have a full knowledge of the western vernacular in order to get the best out of them. As for instance, when a certain missionary came in with one of the freighters to do gospel work for his church. All went well the first two days and they made good time but on the third morning, coming to a really bad mud hole they got stuck tighter than "Billy be —" well if you know the vernacular you know how they were stuck. With all due reverence to the cloth the driver had to keep his language in restraint, but no amount of this mild entreaty could get them to budge. At last in desperation the driver said to his companion "Now, if you would just clmb down, get through the mud and go ahead along the trail out of earshot, we will get out of this difficulty in no time." Showing much discretion the preacher did just that, and the driver, now rid of the restraint, gave that team its full pedigree. Where it came from and where it could go, in language it could understand, and of

course, as the driver had predicted, they were out of the mud hole and caught up with the preacher in quick time.

Perhaps I can speak with some degree of knowledge on this matter for I worked for some time in a railway camp driving mules and what one learned there of the effectiveness of this method was sure an eye opener. Then again in the early years I had nine work oxen on the farm, so of course, I did have some working acquaintance with this western vernacular. What cheap power these bulls were, but how exasperating at times. We would work them until noon, then drop the harness off them and turn them on to the prairie, they would get their water at the slough, then graze to their heart's content on the prairie. At hitch-up time when they saw you coming they would make out they had a heel fly and would high tail it for the slough again. No cajoling would get them out, and, with water up to their bellies, one would have to take off shoes, socks and pants and wade in after them. What a time for a neighbor to drive past, for these short Canadian shirts never did cover much of one's anatomy.

One could go on with these stories seemingly for ever, but one other, and this with a local tinge, will suffice.

One of our neighbour pioneers undertook to freight a load of stoves from Edmonton for Miller Bros. and of course his motive power was oxen. Much as I dislike to say it, it is a fact, he was a poor teamster, and was never noted for the use of much discretion, either in the way of negotiating a difficult trail, or in the matter of what constituted a fair load. His troubles began when he essayed the perilous descent of the river bank with his heavy load. Team and load were out of control when the top stove moved, and in trying to hold it, stove and man were plummeted to the steep river bank. Why and how he held on to the stove as they rolled down the steep incline I suppose will never be known, but if it was wrestling for supremacy I suppose we must concede that man won, for as they came to rest in the shallow water of the river, our homesteader friend was sitting on top of the stove, high, if not dry, with his legs dangling in the water. Meanwhile oxen and wagon in their mad career, were scattering stoves in every direction. Some were completely demolished and others damaged to a greater or lesser degree. How the freighier came out financially I never knew, but I do know that I purchased one of the less damaged stoves

for less than one third of its ordinary price and it did us good service for quite a number of years. Maybe it was the one our friend sat on in the water for when we got it it did show signs of having seen water.

In these days of fast moving mechanical power farming and the fast travelling motor car, to say nothing of the speedy planes which pass overhead every day and night, it is well to look back thus to those days of nearly 50 years ago, and get a glimpse of the time when this vast western country was in the early stages of development, and the slow-moving ox was the pioneer's best friend. Younger readers should remember that the early days of the colony were when it was known as the "Britannia Colony" North West Territories, and before the formation of the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. The name of Britannia is perpetuated by the municipal district to the north of us, the Municipality of Britannia.

I suppose I should not finish this portion of the story without some mention of the work of the Reverend George Exton Lloyd, M.A., chaplain to the colony through the Colonial and Continental Church Society. It was he who took charge when the Reverend Barr deserted the colony, and this at a time when the scheme as a colony seemed doomed to failure.

Many of the colonists at the time had lost some courage and were inclined to turn back but he was able to persuade these to stick with it and all would be well. He was an indefatigable worker and with diplomacy and leadership and the help of a committee of the colonists, the affairs of the community were gradually brought back to normal conditions. Lloydminster, as the name indicates, was named in acknowledgement of Reverend Lloyd's great services to the community. Who has not seen or heard of his log Church (the "Minster") and the fine services he held in that, perhaps primitive, edifice to packed congregations. And who of the old timers who have some thought of sanctity, or who have pride in the history and preservation of such reminders of days gone by, who does not hang his head in shame and some contempt, of conditions or authority, that has allowed an edifice of this kind to be desecrated in the manner this has the past few years. Surely Lloydminster has nothing to be proud of in this matter.

Mrs. Lloyd was a wonderful helpmeet to her busy husband even though she had a family of four young children to attend to. Her's was

always an open shack to any storm bound settler, or anyone in from the prairie for church service. Many a colonist had reason to be thankful for all that this truly great woman did for them. A worthy wife of a worthy man, and in most cases, the visitor was a worthy recipient of their open handed generosity.

Later on Reverend Lloyd (who had brought many young men from the Old Land to work in the Anglican mission field) became Principal Lloyd of Emmanuel College Saskatoon, and later still he became the first Bishop of the Saskatchewan Diocese. Truly a great man, and his memory will live on for ever in the name of Lloydminster.

In concluding this part of the story we may say that the Barr Colonists created a record in many ways.

It was a record number (2000) of immigrants in one party.

It was a record number for one emigrant ship to land, bound for one specific spot;

It was a record as a colonization scheme—it took five long trains of colonist cars to transport them across the continent to the prairies;

It was a record load of baggage and other effects for any one emigrant ship to carry—Then again it was a record performance by the customs officials in passing the goods, in order to facilitate the westward journey of the colonists.

Then to nullify this effort of the customs officials the colonists suffered a record loss, for from that point of passing the customs, the whole, or nearly the whole, of these valuable and useful personal and household effects disappeared—where to? No one knows to this day, but for a long time, one or other of the colonists would have odd pieces of baggage turn up, but for the rest it was just a memory of what was once theirs, and the use they could have put it to in pioneering this new land. For a long, long time "Colonist" and "Baggage" were synonymous terms.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Pioneers of the District and Later Settlers

**P**IONEERS of the School District as now constituted were: 1903 "Barr Colonists"—S. Noyes, H. Noyes, T. Noyes, H. Morrison, C. Watts, J. Merry, H. Osborne, W. Bates, Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Page and children, Margaret and Walter.

In 1904: F. Holden, G. Lamb, Mrs. Lucas and family, Mr. and Mrs. S. Elson and family, Mr. and Mrs. A. Elson and family, Mr. and Mrs. G. Wilford and family and R. Johnson.

In 1905 the population of our community was increased with the arrival of W. Hodgson, Mr. and Mrs. W. Firth and family, Mr. and Mrs. G. Firth and family and Mr. and Mrs. W. Walker and family.

In 1906 with the railway in operation there was quite an influx of new settlers which continued for several years and all homestead land was taken up. As I remember it, there were Bab Armstrong, the Wickers Rowbottoms, the Sharp and Coward families, J. Martin, S. Merry, B. Gibson, J. Gibson, N. Friend, G. Wardle, F. Webber, R. Noyes family, Archdeacon and Mrs. Noyes and N. Goss.

Later on came the Floyds, Scharfs, Wilsons, Minnicks, H. Haughen, Overbys, Hansons, Faulkners, J. McKenzie, Fryers, T. Rhydderch, W. Davis and J. Wood.

Then the Bicknells, Christensens, Pattersons, Chapmans, Smiths, McDonalds, Grahams Harris', W. Longley, and in recent years, Youngs, Murphys, McKays, Steensons, Nutbrowns, Duckers, Golling, Oddan, and at the time of writing, the Redman family have returned after 13 years at the west coast.

With the arrival of the Sharpe and Coward children in October 1906 we had the required number of children for the formation of our school district and steps were taken for the consummation of that object at the earliest possible date. However, it was on in July, 1907, before that was accomplished. I will deal with that later.

All the 1903, '04 and '05 homesteaders came in by way of Saskatoon, and the long trek over the prairie except the "Elson Party" who went.

on to Edmonton by rail. There they had a river scow built of planking and purchased all the necessary outfit, including oxen, wagon, machinery, chickens, etc., and necessary feed for the trip. All this including themselves, was loaded onto the scow and launched on to the broad bosom of the North Saskatchewan River. Owing to very low water this river journey was a long, perilous and adventurous one, of which I will give more details later on.

The trials and tribulations of the colonists on the long trek over the prairie are well told in the books "Lloydminster" by J. McCormick, and "Next Year" by Harry Pick, and my readers would do well to get those books if at all possible.

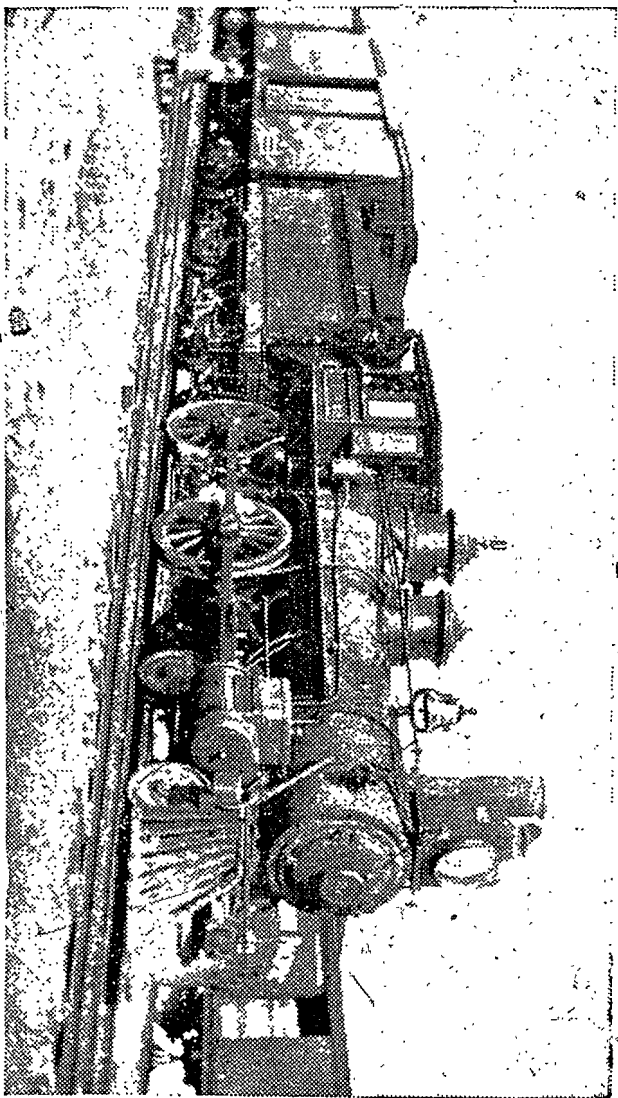
Here I give you a copy of an address prepared and delivered by Mary Noyes at a school rally, held at Rugby School, on Monday, May 24th, 1943, in honour of "Epping School, Australia," and in which nine schools took part.

Mary was at the time a Grade XI student in our school and gathered her information for the address from old pioneers still in the district, and probably from the book "Lloydminster" by J. McCormick. Then, too, her father is a Barr Colonist so anything she has to say can be taken as authentic.

The principal speakers at the rally were the Hon. Hubert Stains, then Minister of Education for the Province, Mr. A. R. Brown, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. F. W. Townley-Smith, who at that time was President of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association.







This is the engine that pulled the first of five-train loads of Barr Colonists into Saskatoon. The Barr Colony was the most successful scheme the West ever had, and this great influx of settlers and the trade it brought, gave Saskatoon its real start.

# CHAPTER THREE

## The Mary Noyes Address

REMINISCENCES OF FARTOWN S. D. 1907 TO 1943

BY MARY NOYES

WITH Fartown's completion of 36 years as a school district and 40 years since the advent of the first settlers it is interesting for us to go back through the years and learn something of its history, and record the same, whilst we still have some of its pioneers in our midst.

At the turn of the century, all that territory west from Battleford, and stretching almost to Edmonton, was a vast virgin country, with its countless centuries of stored up fertility awaiting the coming of the immigrant for its development, and here the physical foundations of empire were present in rich profusion. It was to this part of what was then, the North West Territories; that stretch of land in the form of a V formed by the North Saskatchewan River and the Battle River, that the Barr Colonists made their historic trek in the spring of 1903, and colonized a country 200 miles distant from railway facilities.

The colonists left their native land (The British Isles), and came here in response to advertising of "Government Free Grant Lands" on the prairies of North Western Canada, and the rosy picture painted of Canadian farm opportunities.

The ocean journey which took fourteen days (on the C.P.R. S.S. Lake Manitoba) was rather uncomfortable as the ship lacked the necessary accommodation for such a large party (over 2000), therefore none were sorry when, on Easter Sunday morning, the harbour of St. John, New Brunswick was entered. The landing was an exciting scene, then the entraining of this large party which took five long trains of colonist cars.

The baggage and household goods were of every description, from sewing machines to pianos, to fishing rods and guns. In the end the customs officials gave up their jobs of inspection owing to the delay in passing the goods through, and the desire to do all in their power to facilitate the departure of the party westward. The quantity of goods was a record, for a single immigrant ship to land, but where the bulk of the stuff went to on Leaving St. John, nobody knows to this

day. Occasionally some lucky settler would get word of his belongings, but the greater number had memories only, of what they once possessed and the knowledge of how useful these things would have been to them in a pioneering life.

Saskatoon was then a mere hamlet on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River. Here the trail journey of 200 miles began, and outfits had to be purchased and paid for too. About April 27th, the first of the "Western Expedition" started, the others following in parties or families as desired. As to direction—well there was but that single trail, always pointing west in the direction of the setting sun. They had journeyed over 4000 miles to find it. The trail that led to the future, and to many it meant conquest, effort, life.

That trail was the beginning of real hardship. Untrained animals, inexperienced drivers, heavy loads, and creeks and sloughs, brimmed with water made the trek all but impossible.

They were frequently bogged in the mud. The animals frequently strayed when not hitched up, and following animal instinct they invariably started eastward for their old homes, but not by the travelled road. Often days were spent in locating the animals, and some were never found.

In the Eagle hills the colonists saw their first prairie fire, in all its lurid grandeur and fierceness, and woe to the camp that was overtaken without a fireguard.

What made them go on? That magic charmer "Hope", and the British Spirit—that will always see the thing through somehow.

To that stretch of country between the North Saskatchewan and Battle Rivers, the colonists gave the name of "Britannia Colony"—and that held until the formation of the Province of Saskatchewan, a name perpetuated today in Britannia Municipality.

The "Barr Colonists" were the first permanent inhabitants of this large territory, comprising vast stretches of wide open rolling prairie with its knee high, luxuriant grass and opulent pastures; interspersed with poplar and willow bush which gave it a park like aspect.

Much work had to be done on the "Homestead" ere the winter set in. Most of the settlers were still living in tents. Log houses had to be completed, also outbuildings for the stock. Practically everything had to be made, such as tables and chairs. All of this work could not be done by those on the trail, fetching in supplies of food. Co-operation was

effective and while some freighted, others did the building, etc. The women lent a willing hand whenever possible, hopeful of the future. The romance of prairie life was fully enjoyed. Nature all around, still and silent except for the birds, the enchantment of Indian summer, the Northern Lights, and the mirage on the prairie in the springtime.

During the following year (1904) other families trekked in, but with the coming of the railway two years later still new settlers flocked in, in earnest, and by the spring of 1907 the necessary steps were taken for the formation of our Fartown School District, but owing to difficulties encountered it was not until the following March, that our school was erected, and many of our pioneering children commenced their first schooling. The school building served not only as a school but also as a community centre, where a variety of entertainments were held every two weeks. These gatherings would last from dark to daylight, for in the winter it was always dangerous to travel in the dark with no fences or roads to guide one and the ever present danger of blizzards. Three meals in a night were served, breakfast before leaving for home, and since the crowd gathered from as far as twenty miles the hospitality was greatly appreciated. During the years the district has been mostly fortunate in the matter of teachers, probably the most outstanding being Mr. Robert McGregor, now principal of the Provincial Technical Collegiate at Saskatoon, and Dr. Willard S. Holmes, one of Saskatoon's most prominent M.D.'s.

Each of these gentlemen taught for two years in our school from 1912 to 1915, inclusive, and both still take an interest in the district's affairs. With the settlement being of all British origin, it was only natural that sport should be prominent in the activities of the community. Cricket and football, as well as field events, were prominent sports, and there were many notable exponents of these games in the district. In the early football days the Fartown team won the "Lyle Cup" and for many years the Fartown School Sports were one of the notable events of the year, covering a wide community. The pupils of the school have always taken a keen part in the Wilton United School Sports and during the 22 years of those sports they have won the Shield no fewer than five times, the softball cup, the tug-of-war cup, and many other cups for individual championships.

In connection with World War No.1, is a brass plate in our school recording the names of former pupils who saw service. In the present

World War No. 2, no less than twenty former pupils and ten other residents are at present in the services.

As we appreciate the past and present efforts of our community leaders, and those who co-operate with them, we feel an urge within us to live up to the ideals of these fine examples of Canadian citizenship and so help to build a still greater and better Canada.

For Canada calls to her sons and her daughters

Lift high your standard of manhood today.

Here in the dawn of a great nation's morning

Rings the clear voice of our country's appeal

Calling for heroes, who self interest scorning,

Do what they know, and dare what they feel.



This was the S. Elson home and probably the best built shack in the district. Willow pegs were used instead of spikes in its construction and nails only on doors and windows. We thatched the roof with a long tough straw, like grass, which the Indians called sugar grass, fixing the layers of grass with willow strips and shingle nails. It did turn all and every rain storm for over twenty years when the building was demolished.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Our River Journey

I have dealt mostly with the pioneers coming into the colony via the long trek from Saskatoon. However, there were the odd parties who came in via the North Saskatchewan River route, landing near what later became known as Hewitt's Landing. We did just that, and as promised earlier, I will endeavour to give you a few details of that eventful trip. Leading up to it I may say that we had spent two weeks in Winnipeg, and set out from there for Edmonton, rather than Saskatoon intending, of course, to make the colony via the river route, rather than the long trek over the trail.

En route to Edmonton we became involved in a railway accident near Chaplin, west of Moose Jaw, which toppled two of the passenger cars over and down a high grade, we being in the first one. We had the good fortune to have all our family come out of it with but minor injuries, though there were some very serious cases. Our car came to rest standing on its roof instead of the wheels, which were pointing to the sky, and when we got out we walked along the ceiling and were assisted out at the end of the car.

The accident delayed our journey about 15 hours but we made Strathcona the evening of the next day. That was the end of the line then and we had to cross the river by the low level bridge to Edmonton, which of course, was not much of a town then, and nothing like the imposing city it is today. There was only this one bridge and the ferry then.

We had a river scow built at Walter's Mill on the south side and spent 17 days in Edmonton waiting for the river to rise. It was a very late spring, the weather cold, and the snow was not melting in the mountains, hence the very low water.

A scow is a rather cumbersome affair built of planking. Ours was 24 feet by 30 feet, flat bottomed, square ends, and managed or steered by a long and heavy oar or sweep from the stern. It had very shallow draft, for even when fully and heavily loaded it only drew six inches of water.

We started to load several days before pulling out, and I and my brother slept on, or guarded the craft at night. We had it tied into the

river bank at a spot immediately below the old Hudson's Bay Company's "Fort Edmonton". At that spot a thick seam of coal was outcropping from the river bank, and we would dig out this coal and have a huge fire going all night alongside the scow at the water's edge.

During the last few days we got acquainted with a young fellow whose destination was practically the same as ours. He had bought lumber for a small shack and barn at the Walter's Mill and was having it made into a raft and intended floating it, himself, and his belongings down the river. We saw him off a couple of days before we pulled out. It looked a ticklish business to me—just his raft and he and his belongings on top, not even a row boat in case of accident. However, he set out down the river and everything seemed o.k.; but later on you will see that we caught up with him once again.

We had bought oxen, wagon and necessary farm machinery, as well as chickens, etc. Feed in the way of baled hay and oats for the oxen and mixed grain for the poultry. Also some household equipment including a cook range which we set up on the scow in order to have cooking facilities on the trip. With all this already loaded we finally loaded a six month's supply of provisions for our own use. Then we all climbed aboard and casting off from the bank we were off and away on the broad bosom of this northern stream and thus started what proved to be a most perilous journey down the mighty North Saskatchewan River. At the last moment we had come across a half-breed from Edmonton named Ross, an expert river man, and of course, well acquainted with this North Saskatchewan River. We therefore engaged him to act as pilot for the trip. This proved a mighty fine move, and it didn't take long to find out either, for we soon ran into plenty of difficulties which taxed even his abilities, good river man though he was.

We didn't make much progress that day for it was late in the afternoon when we started, and we tied up for the night on the north side of the river at Frazer's Lumber Mill. The next day, Sunday, was very slow travelling, too, and we had much difficulty in keeping from grounding and getting around the many sandbars and in picking up any current in the stream to keep moving. During the day we passed several coal mines being operated in the river bank.

The next day we made a little better progress, and just as it was getting dusk we spotted Fort Saskatchewan on the south side of the river, so pulled into the bank to camp for the night.

We found this a nice little settlement and I was deputed to go and see if I could locate a bake shop, and lay in a stock of bread, for bread-making was none too handy a job on the scow. I found a bake shop alright, the proprietor guessed I was from the scow which had just tied up at the river bank, that we were fresh from the Old Land, and also asked where we came from. When I said we were from Northamptonshire he really got excited for he was a Northampton man himself, and he had been out here three years. He sure plied me with questions about our native county, and came on down to the scow to continue the conversation and talk with the rest.

The next day we had our first real scare. There was a very strong wind blowing up stream and travel was slow. Then on towards noon we heard an ominous sound. At first it was a low murmuring sound carried by the wind, but gradually grew louder and louder until it became a mighty roar. Our pilot told us it was one of the rapids and it was the low water which caused the roar, but that it would be alright. Suddenly we picked up a quicker current which got faster and faster and soon developed into a mad racing torrent. Immediately we found ourselves tearing through a narrow channel caused by a large island. Huge rocks were showing on either hand, and we and the pilot were working like madmen on the great sweep to guide as best we could this unwieldy craft, as we zig-zagged our way through the turbulent channel.

The noise of the water in the channel was terrific and it was impossible to hear each other's voice through it all, but we could see that our women and children (only recently from the horrors of a train wreck) were awfully scared and were screaming and bawling their heads off. It was soon all over though, for suddenly the noise ceased, the rocks and channel left behind, and though travelling at a great speed we were in safe water. It hadn't lasted long, but coming through that channel seemed an eternity to me.

Things changed quickly and we soon had something else to occupy our attention for there right ahead of us in this very fast stretch of water was our late acquaintance on his raft of lumber. He had run into a tremendous big rock, his raft had slid over with the front end, and the rock had come up through the centre. The current was catching the corners of his craft, spinning it clockwise around and around, like a huge top, and it did look like a helpless situation. However, we couldn't



do a thing for it took us all our time and a tremendous effort on the sweep to steer our own craft from the same fate and quicker than it takes to tell we were around a bend in the river and out of sight. He had a two day start of us and we often wondered how long he had been spinning around and how he eventually made out.

Later on in the day we had plenty of trouble negotiating many sand bars, but the skill of our pilot in picking out the deeper and faster channels, made fair progress possible, but when at dusk, we camped in the heavy timber on the south bank, we were a very tired bunch.

We made fair progress next day, then late in the afternoon, on rounding a bend in the river we spotted a number of shacks upon the high bank on the north side. The sun, which was getting quite low, showed these up like a picture, and we really got excited, for here surely was a settlement, and it didn't take us long to decide that this was the place where we would camp for the night. Whilst making our scow secure we noticed upriver a string of three scows which we had seen loading with bags of oats at Edmonton, and which we just beat in starting out; their destination being the same as ours. We readily recognized them in the distance because of a saddle pony on one of the scows. We watched them as they came on down the river and passed close to our scow. We gave them a cheer as they approached, which was returned by the men aboard, but as they passed one sarcastic voice shouted "Good-bye, we will see you again in the fall!". We felt some resentment at that, particularly our pilot, but you will see that we got our own back the next day, when we gave them the real old horse laugh.

We got a fire going and made camp, then while the women folk prepared supper, some of us climbed the high bank to investigate. We soon found out that it was an entire Indian settlement, being the Lobstick Indian Reservation and the Indians we met were quite friendly and warm in their welcome.

Just as we finished supper a young fellow who could speak good English, came along to say that the Chief of the band would like us to visit with him in his lodge. We accepted with alacrity, the messenger accompanying us. At the top of the bank we came into quite a large clearing around which were dotted many log shacks, varying in size, the Chief's being, of course, the most pretentious.

Reaching the Chief's lodge our guide led us into a medium sized

room, entirely devoid of furniture. A couple of elderly squaws were seated on fur rugs on either side of an open fire on the earth floor, there was no chimney, just a hole in the roof above to take care of the smoke. Both were smoking pipes, and making a bigger cloud than the fire itself. We were shown into a much larger room, with a long rough lumber table down the centre and a long plank form on either side. The Chief was sitting in an arm chair at the head of the table and was the only one there as we entered. As I entered the room I noticed some peculiar objects hanging on the walls around the room, and it was only a few seconds before I realized that they were scalps.

Then I am sure my own hair must have risen at least a trifle, for I felt quite a creepy sensation pass over my own scalp.

The old chief whom we found could speak English quite well, must have noticed that I was taking stock of these relics, for he laughingly told me that mine was quite safe, and then proceeded to tell us about them. They were all scalps he had taken in his young buck days in their many bloody encounters with the traditional enemy, the Blackfoot tribe. He pointed out a number of them and told us the names of the warriors they belonged to.

With that over he told us that he was the chief of this Lobstick Reservation and that he was known as Chief Tee-see-kar-wass-iss (I have spelled that phonetically.) He, of course, wanted to know our name, and when I told him our name was Elson he burst out into lively merriment. I guess he saw we were wondering at his hilarity, for he hastened to explain that Tee-see-kar-wass-iss, translated into English was "Son of the heavens" whilst we were "Son of the other place." At this, I suppose, we laughed more heartily that he, and I sure have had some fun relating that story to all and sundry, including some of the most prominent of our provincial citizens.

We had a long evening with the old chief listening to stories of his tribe's wanderings, and hunting the buffalo, and also of their many encounters with the Blackfeet, and I for one was loath to leave. He begged us to stay over the next day, and if we would do this and give him a half-pound packet of tea and a packet of tobacco, he would gather up all the young bucks and the young squaws and would put on a Sun Dance for our benefit.

However, we had been so long on our journey we were anxious to get to the end, so we did not stop. However, we did give the old chief

a one pound packet of tea and a half dozen packets of tobacco, and to see the old fellow's face light up at that, was quite a picture, but he still said he would like us to stay over. Since that time I have often wished we had done so, and let the old chief give us an eyeful of this traditional ceremonial of the Redmen; for there are not so many white men who have seen the Sun Dance. I am satisfied that the old chief would have seen to it that we ourselves would not have been victims of any excesses that might have arisen.

I think the old fellow must have been well pleased with our visit for the next morning when we pulled out from the river bank I think all the Indian folk on the Reserve were there to give us a tremendous send off.

We made slow progress owing to the many sand bars, and we were still on the north side of the river when our pilot decided that it would be better water and faster on the south side. It took some time and hard work on the sweep to do this, but we soon found he was correct. We had barely effected the change when we spotted the three scows once more. They were still on the north side and were stuck tight on an extensive sandbar. We passed some distance to the south of them, and gave them a real Bronx cheer, whilst our pilot climbed to the top of our luggage boxes and crowed at them like a rooster. He said they should have changed their course at the same place as we, and figured they would be stuck there for three days or more.

We, of course, were going slow, but merrily, on our way, and made the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Victoria just at noon. We tied up there for a couple of hours or more, had a long chat with the factor, and replenished our larder, so that we would not have to unpack our main supply. Fort Victoria is at the site of the Pakan Mission, founded and built by the Rev. George McDougall in the early 1860's. So great was his following of natives that the Hudson's Bay Company built a post there to take care of its trade with them, and gave it the name Fort Victoria. This stop would have been more interesting if we had known anything at that time of the McDougall family and their work in the Territory, though while in Edmonton we did worship at the McDougall little log church, which, thank goodness, is still preserved, and stands alongside the present massive McDougall Memorial Church on the high bank of the river. If my readers can obtain John McDougall's book "Saddle Sleigh and Snowshoe" they would learn much about this part of the western prairies, away back in the 1860's.

Continuing, our trip was not so eventful as it had been, still slow but less trouble, our only real difficulties being at Crooked Rapid and the sand bars at Vermillion River. The rapid was even more dangerous than the previous one for we scraped bottom on at least a half dozen rocks, and had to dodge as best we could a very large poplar that had crashed from atop of the high bank down into the channel, and we were fortunate to come through without damage.

We passed what our pilot told us was the St. Paul de Metis half breed settlement on the Sunday afternoon. The sun was bright and many of the young folk dressed in gay and varied colours, made a lovely picture as they stood on the high bank, cheering and waving to us as we passed by.

It took us until Thursday to get to the mouth of the Vermillion River, and there we had real trouble owing to the great sand bars which seemed to block every channel. It took us about four hours to get around and past these and it was eight o'clock in the evening when we tied up at the bank east of the Vermillion. We made camp and had just finished supper when the clouds, which had been threatening, really burst and bucketed the water down for most of the night.

Friday was uneventful, and on the Saturday at noon, two weeks almost to the hour, our journey came to an end as we tied up to a spot on the south bank where a number of freighters were congregated, awaiting the arrival of the three scows loaded with oats, for it seemed there was a feed oat famine in the colony.

During the afternoon we unloaded the scow at the spot now known as Hewitt's Landing. Miller Brothers took over our scow and dismantled it for lumber, and in exchange freighted three loads of our belongings to the Colony. We stayed at the river over Sunday and at church service met the Reverend Lloyd for the first time.

We pulled out on Monday morning after putting our wagon together and loading it with the remainder of our effects. We made the Gully in a heavy rain storm which lasted some hours and we camped for the night at a bluff where there were plenty of dead trees and had a roaring fire to dry ourselves out. Next morning we negotiated the Gully and the mud without too much difficulty and reached Lloydminster just after noon. It had taken us ten weeks to complete the trip; a journey which we had expected to do at most in four weeks.

Here I would like to say that the day before we started from Edmonton we were introduced to the Bob Williams family and a Miss Harvey. They had just arrived and wanted to get to the Colony, and there was no immediate prospect of another scow. The result was that they came along with us, and thus we made the biggest party of immigrants to make the Colony on one scow via the river route. Miss Harvey was bringing out Eric Rendell who, as a baby, had been left in England when his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Rendell had come out with the Barr party. Later on Miss Harvey became the bride of Sergeant McCarthy, one of our N.W.M.P. detachment stationed at Lloydminster in the early pioneer days.

And what of our pilot? Well, he wanted to get to Battleford, so we gave him our rowboat which we had trailed along behind the scow. Also one of our shot guns which we had damaged somewhat in one of our hunting forays during the trip. We also gave him a supply of flour and matches to get fire when needed, and away he went well pleased with himself and profuse thanks to us for the many kindnesses bestowed upon him during the trip.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Prairie Fires

**I**N the early days of sparse settlement and the vast stretches of open rolling prairie the danger of prairie fire was ever present in both the spring and the fall. With the settlement of the country and the breaking of the prairie sod and conversion into a continuous succession of farms, it is perhaps a bit difficult for our younger folk to visualize just what the country was like in the days of which we speak.

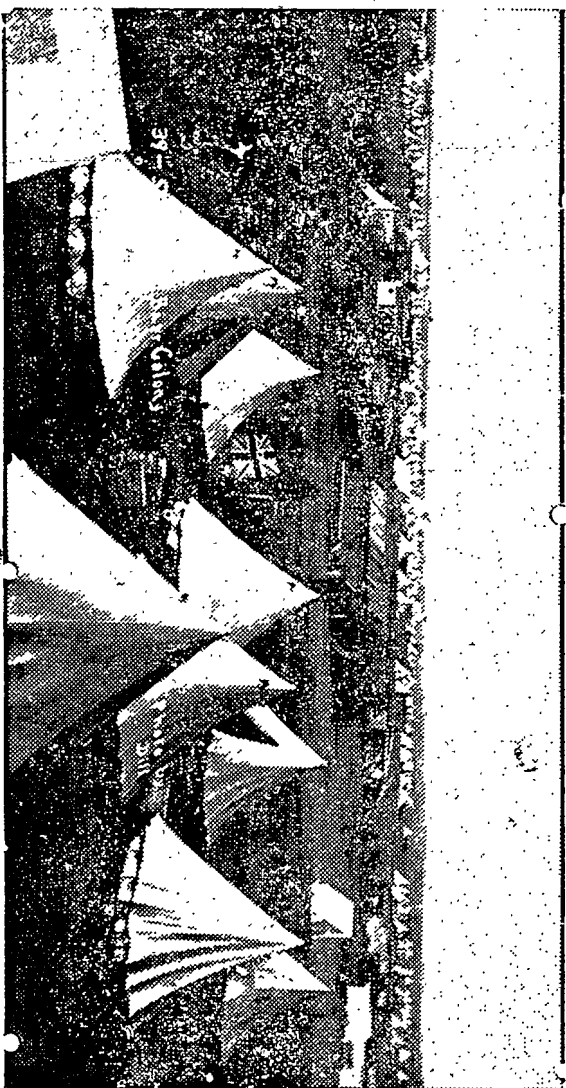
The great open rolling prairie can best be described by me as a tremendous sea of luxuriant knee-high grasses, and given an ocean-like aspect by the waving of the grass in the wind and the rolling nature of the land formation. Also I think I can truly say that there was nothing else on God's earth, so much like the mighty ocean, as were the vast rolling prairies of the Canadian North West.

With that picture of countless miles of luxuriant growth, and dry as tinder with its seasonal ripening and drying, it may readily be seen what a terrible menace to life and property this could be, if once fire was started, and woe betide the luckless individual who had neglected his fire guard.

With miles and miles of open country and little or nothing to check it, its lurid grandeur and frightening ferocity were sometimes terrifying, especially with a breeze behind it, and I never did see a big prairie fire without it for it always seemed to create a wind of its own. With a heavy growth, given the right condition, these seasonal fires were a fearsome menace and could, and did at times, take a heavy toll.

When they did occur it was a matter of co-operation for individual efforts seemed puny against the might of a free-running fire. Usually we would get out in gangs to fight the oncoming enemy, but sometimes one had to look to his own, and combat it as best he could.

We had many of these fires, some of a very serious nature. The first that I remember was on a Saturday morning the first fall we were here. I was away from home at the time; myself and sister, being on our way to Lloydminster for food supplies. We were about six miles from home when, on looking back, we saw heavy smoke apparently south of what is now Lashburn, but as our fireguards were O.K., we really



A particularly interesting picture showing the Barr Colony tent village which sprang up overnight at Saskatoon. It was from this point that they started their historic trek of 200 miles into the "Promised Land," and these intrepid pioneers, cheerful and undaunted, took all hardships and privation in their stride.

didn't pay much attention to it. A bit further on we met Tom Edwards, of what is now the Wirral District. He, like us, had only just noticed the smoke and thought it was close to his own place, but we thought it was further east. However, he hurried on, and we continued our journey and heard nor saw anything further of the fire until on our way home on Monday morning when we again met Edwards at almost the same spot. He said he had arrived home only just in time to save his house, as his wife and daughter were played out and the fire was beating them. He also told us our place was all right. The fire had been stopped away west of us, and although outside of our fireguard all was black and desolate, everything inside was O.K., and when he had passed in the distance he had seen our people about and had waved to them, so we had no worry.

When we got a proper look at our home I will never forget the sight which met our gaze. It is true we had not lost a thing. The fireguard and breaking had saved the day for us, but that black and desolate view for miles around will never be erased from my mind. Truly the fairly large piece of land saved by the fireguard and breaking, looked like an oasis in the desert, and it did suffice for our cattle during the remainder of the fall, and fortunately we had all our hay stacked inside the fireguard.

We had much experience of this nature during the next few years, but probably the worst was in the fall of 1908, when we had one which was a real holy terror, and because our grain was in stack at the time, it did threaten us with disaster. We beat it in the end but what a fight we had to put up.

At the time I did a write-up of this for publication in the Old Land; and perhaps it is permissible to give some highlights of this, our worst, fire. Many in the Territory had it just as bad as we, but none had to put up a more strenuous fight.

Harvest weather had been grand and everything was as dry as tinder. One morning we noticed a fire start up four or five miles to the south east, and with an east wind blowing we figured it would keep south of the hill as it travelled west and would probably die or be put out. It did go for a long way west but stayed very much alive as we could see the smoke all day. After supper that evening I said to my wife, if the wind changes we will have that fire back here before morning. I am going to hitch up the bulls again and plow stubble for a



fireguard along the west line. I saw my brother-in-law, Ralph Johnson, and told him he should do the same thing, but he thought it unnecessary. I worked all night, and with a change in the wind, the fire was coming our way at a fast clip. I got a thirty-foot stubble guard done, then did one on the prairie joining up from there to Johnson's stubble, and that was pretty hard work for the oxen. Then as a precautionary measure I went and run a few furrows around my grain stacks.

At six o'clock I saw Johnson working like mad fireguarding on his stubble, but in about an hour the fire was on us. It hit me hard and plump, but gave him some respite until it could get past the slough.

Backfiring against a terrible strong wind was of little or no use, and the fire with flames fifty or sixty feet high, hit my guard with a terrific roar. Well, was it that I had fireguarded my stacks, for at a point in direct line, the fire jumped the guard as if nothing had been there, and in a flash was licking at the guard around the stacks. We did succeed in putting it out on the stubble, but as it worked along to the prairie guard that I had plowed, it beat us and was up and past my buildings in seconds and was through the centre of our section and away east on the open prairie again in quicker time than it takes to write. My home buildings were well guarded and, of course, all right.

With my own place now reasonably safe, I rushed my team over to give Johnson a hand. I fireguarded his stacks, while he was working desperately on the west side of his stubble. There we managed to retard the fire by backfiring. It was a pretty hard job we had on hand and it took us to almost noon getting it headed into the slough at his north west corner. With that done, we had a little respite, but it had beat us several times on to the stubble, but each time we had the good fortune to put it out.

So far as we were concerned we had saved the day when we got the fire headed into that slough, and we had time to get a bite to eat and to feed the oxen. However, on in the afternoon we had to contend with several backfires, coming from the fire that went through the centre of the section, but my father's stacks were well protected by two pieces of breaking and the fireguard around the buildings.

With that done and feeling pretty weary we slowly made our way back to the buildings for a well earned rest. But that was not to be for before we got there we saw an ominous cloud of smoke to the north west. We soon found we had a new enemy to combat, for here was another fire only a couple of miles away and nothing to stop it. For

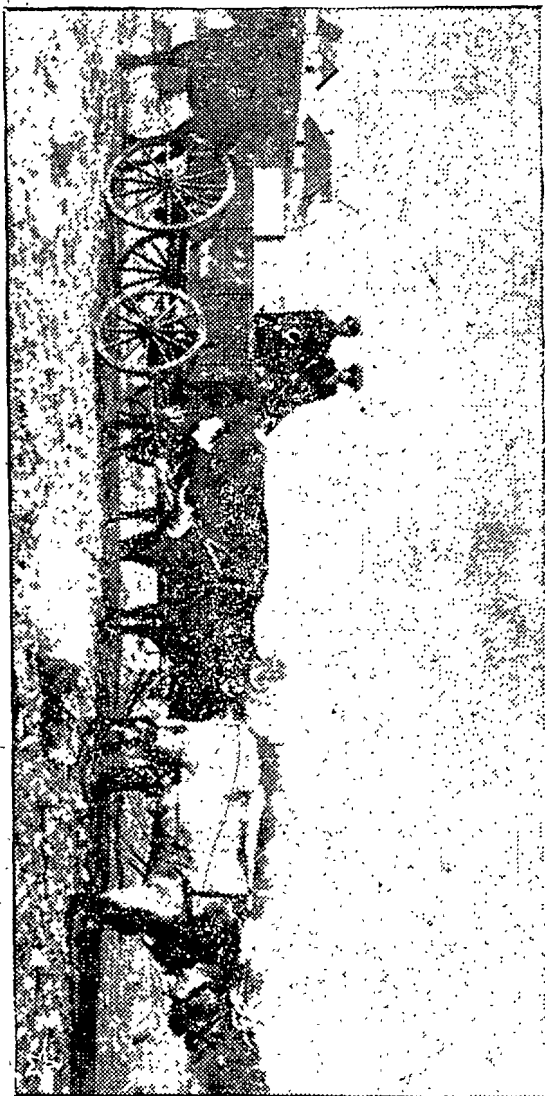
protection we had Johnson's breaking and my father's breaking on the east and south sides of his pasture. It seemed it would burn up his pasture but would then run into a dead end, and it did just that.

We had a big stack of hay to the east of father's breaking and if the fire worked around the north end it wouldn't take long to go south to the stack. I had worked hard putting up that hay and didn't want to see it go up in smoke. My father was about played out, so I went off with the team and walking plow, thinking to plow a couple of furrows around it and backfire from that to save the stack. About half way there my wife caught up with me. She wasn't going to let me go alone, and that proved a good thing. When we got there we found the fire had made faster time than we figured, and I had only time to cut a V around the stack with the nose of the plow. Then my wife grabbed the lines and raced the team and plow back on to the breaking. I flipped out the lead of the fire with my jumper just as it hit the corner of the V and guided it first one side, then the other, but by this time I was encircled in a ring of fire. I soon found I was in a dangerous spot, for the heat and smoke were terrific; but I did keep the stack from firing. Over the roar of the fire and wind, I could hear my wife screaming and sobbing and shouting my name, but my shouts did not reach her owing to the strong wind. She thought I was really being barbecued. It was a happy moment when, with the stack safe, I made my way through the heavy smoke to my wife and the team on the breaking, and I don't know which felt the most relieved, she or I. With a big slice of luck we had saved the stack, but if there is any hotter spot than the one I was in for awhile, I sure hope I may not be committed to it.

As we made our way back to the buildings over the blackened earth we felt pretty weary. It had sure been a day to remember and after all the years, it seems to come back just as vivid as when it all happened. Without some experience of former fires, we might easily have lost everything. Some of our friends did not do so well, losing all their grain stacks and many lost buildings as well.

Prairie fires in those early days were a terrible menace; spectacular to look at, especially in the night and at a distance; with all their lurid grandeur, but at close quarters a fearsome enemy with the habit of licking up everything in its path.

This then, was our greatest fight against this unrelenting enemy of the early settler. I and my team had worked two days and a night on end, so we took a couple of days rest and I guess we had earned it.



Homesteaders in the Saskatoon District, 1904

# CHAPTER SIX

## Formation of the School District

AS stated previously it was in July of 1907 that we really got moving which a meeting was called for the purpose of electing members to the board of trustees. All the necessary preliminaries had already been attended to, such as the name, the boundaries, etc., and these had been approved by the Education Commissioners.

As regards the name "Fartown" I can state that this was the name of a residential district in the industrial town of Huddersfield, Yorkshire, England, the home of the Firth and Walker families, and if the writer's memory is correct it was also the home of the great rugby football club of that city.

The boundaries, of course, had to conform to those of the Wirral and Marshall School Districts, which had already been formed, and were in operation. The district followed the usual pattern of twenty sections, being five miles long and four miles wide.

The result of the election was that Arthur Elson, George Firth and W. A. Sharp were elected as the first Board of Trustees, their terms of office being three, two and one year, in that order.

The first board meeting was held at the home of Mr. A. Elson on August 23rd, and following the result of the election, Arthur Elson was elected chairman of the board and William Walker, secretary-treasurer, and it was thus that the writer's 42 years of continuous service to the district was started. Mr. Michael Wicker's free offer of one acre of land on the north east corner of the North West quarter of section 12, in township 43, range 27, west of the 3rd meridian, as a school site had already been accepted and thanks extended to Mr. Wicker for same.

Further business at that first meeting of the board was the erection of the school and the passing of a bylaw, re debentures for payment of same. At a subsequent meeting it was decided to call for tenders for the erection of a school building 24 feet by 30 feet, and also an offer by a Regina financial firm for the purchase of the \$1,000.00 debenture at \$960.00 and 8% interest, was accepted.

Everything was going well, the contract for the building had been let, the work to be done during the fall. Then the financial firm who had

made arrangements for the purchase of the debenture, backed down from the original offer of \$960.00 and made a new offer of \$940.00. The board felt considerable resentment of this proceeding and turned the whole matter down. It did hold up the matter of building the school until the spring, for it was on in the New Year when the \$1,000.00 debenture was sold to another Regina firm, and this time at par.

Mr. R. Armstrong was the contractor whose bid, when tenders were called, was for the sum of \$700.00, and this amount, with \$50 for extras, was the total cost of the school buildings. What a contrast compared with today's cost! The balance of the debenture was spent in the necessary fixtures and equipment through E. N. Moyer Co., and everything was ready for school opening in early May.

Mr. Luce Le Ruez had been engaged as teacher for six months at a salary of \$50.00 per month, and school opened on Monday, May 18th, 1908. A copy of the register this first day shows are following pupils in attendance:

Jack Rowbottom	Doris Firth	Evelyn Elson
Eric Rowbottom	Madge Firth	Bert Elson
George E. Sharp	Joe Firth	Maisie Walker
Herbert Sharp	Ronald Firth	Jack Coward
Elma Ruttan	Edward Firth	Frank Coward

The following week saw Harry Wilford, Maud Wilford and Ernest Wilford added to the list.

It is interesting to go back to the names of the pupils in that first register. With one exception they are all married with families of their own, and some few are grandparents. One of these grandchildren is now attending the school, and some few others will soon be of school age.

The school was open for six months, then closed for the winter, as we had no roads, just trails on the open prairie, and the probable attendance would be negligible.

At a trustees' meeting held on the same day, May 18th, the following regulations for the conduct of the school were adopted:

The hours shall be 9 a.m. to 12 noon, and from 1 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

There shall be periods of recreation not exceeding 15 minutes during both morning and afternoon sessions.

The school shall open each day with the reciting of The Lord's Prayer.

The Church of England Missionary, stationed at Marshall, shall be allowed to give religious instruction for one half-hour weekly.

Thus was our school conducted in this its first year, as well as for many succeeding years. Arrangements were also made and charges fixed for the attendance of pupils from outside the district, and there were quite a number of these pupils in those early years.



Marshall, 1908.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Social Activities

PRIOR to the building of the school all our social activities had been rather restricted to such amenities as could be conducted in private homes especially in the winter months, but now with the school available full use of it for this purpose was taken advantage of.

Entertainment committees were organized for many years and Fartown was second to none in the manner in which they provided various forms of entertainment, both for our own district and the surrounding territory, and it was always a saying amongst visitors that you could always have a good time at anything put on at Fartown. Sports in the summer, whist drives and dances in the winter and of course the all important Christmas Tree were our principal indulgence in social events.

There were some few amongst our residents at this time who had been connected with and keenly interested in sport activities in the old land, principally perhaps in the sport of cricket, football and track events. Just here it might be well to mention that the Fartown football team won the "Lyle" cup, emblematic of supremacy in this part of North West Saskatchewan, in the season of 1915.

Always sport minded, it was no wonder that in the first year of our school, midsummer sports were arranged and a program of varying events for the young folk drawn up. In addition there was a cricket match, followed by a football match in the evening.

This arrangement was carried on for a number of years and was a great success, and for a long time was one of the principal summer attractions in this territory.

This effort of ours did serve to instil in our youngsters the true spirit of sport. Also it did bear fruit, for later on when the Wilton United School Sports were organized, our pupils always proved great contenders for top honors and though these sports have now died out the splendid shield awarded the most successful school was won on five occasions by our pupils, and this shield now hangs in our school room. Also in connection with these sports, they have, from time to time, won the softball cup, the tug-of-war cup, and many other cups for individual championships. Two of our local sportsmen, the writer and

Frank Sharp, were members of the directorate of those sports for a long period of years and were two of the principal officials responsible for carrying out of the large number of events which comprised the program.

Reverting back to our own sports, it was always a great day for youngsters, and oldsters alike, and it is a pleasure to look back to the real competitive spirit of the youngsters in the various events. Then it was the winning that was the chief objective and the prize seemed a secondary matter. One of my friends says compare that with today—well I will let my readers make their own comparisons.

With a large crowd such as we usually had, there was often some amusing incidents that would arise to cause some hilarity and I would like to relate the following incident:

I am not sure if "Ike" our genial hotel proprietor in Marshall ever got out to our sports, but I do know that he always sent out a barrel of beer "free gratis" for the crowd. George Firth always took charge of this and dispensed it to all and sundry who cared to take a drink. Strong drink never did interest me so perhaps I am privileged to say that I never knew anyone in all the years to abuse the privilege of this free beer, or perhaps I should say, I only knew it to happen once, that was by a horse. The details follow. One of our farmer friends from over the hill, south-west, drove up with one of his farm plugs hitched to a buggy. It was a hot day and a very dry summer. There was no water in any of the sloughs, there were no drilled wells in those days and water supply was a problem with everyone. Evidently this horse had not been watered, was thirsty and very restless on his tether peg. George in charge of the barrel as usual, had saved a couple of gallon or so, for half-time refreshment in the football game. At the proper time he procured a pail and emptied the barrel into it. He then carried the barrel to the school entrance so it should be handy for someone to pick up and return it to town. In the meantime the horse had spotted the pail and, of course, could only associate that with a drink (which it was), so he had pulled up his tether peg, raced up to the pail, and George arrived back just as the horse was taking the last gulp. What George told that horse or the names he gave it, cannot be told here, but George had driven bulls for several years, so any "Old Timer" can make a pretty good guess. The horse moved on to the refreshment stall scaring a couple of our pretty young "Misses" doing



duty there. He took a sniff at the lemonade jars, but passed that up with a snort of disdain, but he sure got excited when he found the empty beer keg, rolling it around, sniffing and picking at the bunghole.

He was making such a nuisance of himself that his owner decided he had better hitch him up again and drive home. However, this was no easy matter—whether it was the beer or not, I don't know but it took a half dozen men to get him hitched to that buggy and headed away from the school and the barrel. When they did get him headed in the right direction, away he went in top gear, and for the next couple of minutes all we could see was a big cloud of dust, as he wound his way up, and along the trail through the hills on the school section.

Thus the football teams had to settle for lemonade at half-time, but for some reason the second half did lack its usual vim and aggressiveness and time came with a very tame finish.

Now to our winter activities. Our Christmas Tree and Entertainment was, of course, the highlight, a great time for the children, and always looked forward to for many weeks in advance. For some years we were unable to get a real Christmas tree and were perforce obliged to get a leafless poplar and decorate the branches, to resemble somewhat the proper thing. In this connection I would like to put on record the story of the way we procured our first proper Christmas tree. To tell it properly it is rather a long story but as it involved the stopping of a passenger train, and then two stops by Railway Superintendent Brown's special train, I think it is well worth the telling. A story which surely cannot be duplicated by any other school district in the west.

At our usual committee meeting when making arrangements for the event, myself and George Firth were appointed to obtain by "hook or by crook" a proper Christmas tree, and to take up the matter immediately. The next morning George was at my place and said that Jack Corker had some Christmas trees on his place some few miles east and north of town so we both went to town to see if we could contact him, and had the luck to meet him at one of the elevators. Oh yes, Jack had lots of Christmas trees, but they were only five or six inches high!

However, luck was with us for when we went into Crone's Store that gentleman informed us that he had ordered us a Christmas tree the day before. Someone had been taking orders for trees and would be making a trip over the Saskatchewan River and the trees would be in Marshall two days before the date of our event. This was good and

our troubles seemed over, but when I went into town at the proper time alas, no tree. Water had come down on top of the river ice and rotted it and crossing was impossible.

Then I thought of my brother, Frank, who was section foreman on the C.N.R. at Highgate, so I went over to the depot to see if McKellar, the agent, could contact him. As there was no agent at Highgate he could not wire him, but he would give a note to the 5.30 a.m. train crew and get them to drop it off to Frank. As the local freight did not come out of North Battleford until this train pulled in, Frank would have time to get a tree and flag the train down.

Well, of course, that morning, the passenger train had to be over two hours late consequently the local had come out of North Battleford and the trains had passed at Delmas further west. Anyway, the train pulled up at where the section crew was working and delivered the message. They also told him that another train was waiting for them to get into Battleford, so he would have time to get the tree and flag the train down. Frank immediately got busy, sent one man east to flag the train and he and the crew went to a nearby ravine to get the tree. As they were dragging it up the bank they heard the train crossing the river bridge and then coming up the Highgate Hill. It was just as the train came in sight that Frank suddenly remembered that the Superintendent's special train went east yesterday. Could this be him returning? Well, anyway, if it was, things could not be altered, and he would have to face the music. As the train came to a stop alongside the crew and the Christmas tree, the first man off sure enough was the superintendent, and his first words were: "What's wrong, Frank? Broken rail?" "No" says Frank, "I just want to get this Christmas tree delivered to Marshall." "CHRISTMAS TREE" says the Super. "And do you usually stop special trains for your Christmas trees?" Says Frank "Well, you see, this is a special tree." The Superintendent linked his arm in Frank's and walked him a little way up the track and then said "Frank, there is something at the back of all this and I would like to know about it." So Frank gave him the story as to his brother being secretary of the Fartown School District, south of Marshall, that their school Christmas tree was on the morrow, that they had never yet had a proper tree, but always a decorated leafless poplar. That he had just had a note from me delivered by the train crew, and the only way he could have the tree delivered was to flag this train down. The Superin-

tendent says: "Frank, your tree is in good hands and I will see personally that it gets to your brother O.K. Poor kids, a leafless poplar for a school Christmas tree. You know very well, Frank, that in ordinary circumstances I would not have been back until tomorrow, but our school Christmas tree is tonight, and as I am chairman, I am hurrying back for it. I have to make some kind of speech to the children and have been trying to think up something interesting to tell them. Well, I will have a great story now, so come on let's get the tree on the train". This being done and the crew back on the train, he turned back to Frank and said: "Don't worry about the tree. If your brother is not in Marshall I will see that it gets out to him this afternoon." Well, the agent got a surprise when the train pulled up at the Marshall depot, and the superintendent delivered the tree with the instructions that if Arthur Elson was not in town, he was to get the livery barn man to drive out and deliver that tree at once, and the bill for this was to be forwarded to him personally at Edmonton.

Well, of course, I was in town and got the tree O.K.

It is a long story, but it does go to show that even our top railway officials are at least human when it comes to the welfare of our children. Surely no other school could duplicate this.

Finally, one cannot speak of our Christmas tree without bringing up the name of Mr. W. T. Page. For almost the whole of our existence he has functioned as the key man, and has done so much to bring joy and happiness to our youngsters, to start off the festivities of the Christmas season. We owe a lot to Mr. Page for the success which has always dominated this seasonal event.

Social events held at the school were our main indulgence during the long winter. For a number of years, until and after other school districts were formed, we had a regular entertainment committee who were responsible for the welfare of not only our immediate community, but for much of the surrounding territory in the matter of social entertainment. For a long period these were held every fortnight during the winter months and were always a huge success. Mostly they took the form of a whist drive and dance, and many of the crowd who always turned up, came from long distances. These events were always something to look forward to and we always did well in the matter of eats for there was supper at midnight, a hand-out later on and always something for breakfast before quitting at daylight. In those days we never had to

bother about engaging a band or orchestra for the dancing, there were always several violins and a couple of accordians there, and various boys would spell one another off throughout the program. Looking back we had no piano at the school those days, but we never lacked music and good music, too. Then there was Billy Hodgson's gramophone for any emergency. Many of our friends to the south of us were always regular in attendance and did much to make these social events the great success they were. Amongst those that come most readily to mind, from outside our own district were: Alec Milne, George Keith, the Pating boys, the McKenzie family, the Slate's, the Ruttan family, the Yeoman's Alec Findlay, the Clark's, the Olivers, Billy Allison, Tom Forbes, Billy Bryan, Ira Blue, the Rogan's and many others. All these and their retinue along with our own crowd, could, and did, make for much fun and entertainment and always a jolly good time.

Of course, we always did all the conventional dances, round and square, but we didn't stop at that, and as I go back in memory I seem to both see and hear, all the fun and hilarity as we did "The Flowers of Edinburgh," "Strip the Willow" and "Petronella." Even today, as I write this, and old as we are, our toes begin to tingle, and our feet tapping in time with the tuneful lilt, as we recall the merry music with all its jollity, and wonder how these would fit in today's dance programs.

How different things are today. Now our young folk can get into the car, and travel ten, twenty or any number of miles, to some dance hall where some big dance band has been engaged; but in those days of primitive travel, communities had more or less to make and provide their own entertainment, and in that regard I can without boasting in any way, say once again that Fartown was second to none.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## School Affairs and Teachers

**W**E have diverted somewhat from strictly school affairs, so let's get back on that ground and turn to the matter of teachers.

As previously mentioned, Mr. Luce La Ruéz was our first teacher. He was a teacher by profession in the old land, but had recently homesteaded in what is now the Lone Rock area. His engagement was for a period of six months as it was deemed inadvisable to attempt to run a winter school. From then on for several years it was impossible to do more owing to the rapid settlement of the province, and the consequent opening up of hundreds of new schools each year. The Province was still in its infancy and facilities were too limited for the training of adequate numbers of teachers. However, students of Queen's University of Kingston, Ont., came to the rescue, and each spring hundreds of them came out west to Saskatchewan and taught in our rural schools until such time as they had to return to Queen's in order to register for further university term. As a whole they were a grand bunch and Saskatchewan owes a lot to them for the service they rendered in our schools at that period.

Mostly throughout our existence as a School District we have been fortunate in the matter of teachers. For a period of five years we were fortunate enough to secure the services of Queen's men and we always look back to that period as the high light as regards teachers.

The first of these students, Bert McDougall, taught during 1911. He was followed by Robert McGregor, who was with us in 1912, and came back again for 1913. Incidentally I might mention here that it was Bob McGregor who first brought us the news of the Titanic disaster. We, of course, had no radios in those days.

Willard S. Holmes followed for the next two years, 1914 and 1915, to continue the good work. All three of them gained their B.A. degrees at Queen's. Bert McDougall left us to take up an engineering position with the Federal Government. Robert McGregor taught for a time in Saskatoon city schools, and when the Provincial Government erected the Provincial Technical Institute at Saskatoon it was Bob McGregor whom they chose for its principal, a position he still holds. Willard Holmes joined up with the Air Force in the first World War and later took up

the study of medicine and today he is one of Saskatoon's better known medical men.

All three of these gave us splendid service and proved themselves wonderful citizens. Ever-ready to give a helping hand to anyone requiring it, they could, and did, turn their hand and ability to anything, or any job that turned up outside of school hours, and we older members of the community like to look back to the days when they so truly made themselves one of us. We, of course, have had a long list of teachers during the years, the feminine sex being dominant in numbers, and mostly I would say, were efficient and a credit to their profession. Like most other schools and in the conduct of same, we have had our fair share of amusing incidents.

For instance, we have had two teachers who were adept (if that term can be used) at creating "Spoonerisms", that is the transposing of letters or words. This, of course, quite unconsciously, and they often did just that. At one time a pupil named Garnet had "left the room" and on returning had gone to his seat leaving the school room door wide open. The teacher, looking up from her desk, surprised the pupil by saying "Go back and shut the door Darnet," and then wondered why the pupils were smiling. Then there was another one who on a rather cool fall day asked one of the pupils to go down the basement and "Fight the lire," when of course she meant "Light the fire."

One other teacher story and then I am through, although I am not sure of its authenticity. The teacher had a number of the younger pupils up at the blackboard. They had just been promoted to the four letter word stage and she had a number of four letter words on the blackboard and was taking words and pupils in rotation. Little "Tommy's" turn came with the word FEET. He had several stabs at it but couldn't get it correct, so the teacher, thinking to help him, said, "Well, Tommy, What is it that a cow has four of, while I have only two?" Tommy's answer was, of course, perfectly correct but was altogether unlooked for and most embarrassing for the teacher.

Another phase of the conduct of our school was the matter of religious instruction. As previously stated, this was limited to one half-hour per week, and was undertaken by the incumbent of the St. George's Anglican Church, at Marshall. However, with the many changes in the matter of the incumbency, it did not tend for continu-

ous, or regular service in that regard, though we did have some few ministers who did grand service and served us well.

Two of these whom I would like to mention were the Rev. Charles Barnes, 1908 to 1912, and the Rev. L. Erealay, 1930 to 1935. Besides the matter of religious instruction, both these old friends did great work amongst our children, particularly in the matter of Boy Scout work, and the summer camp they organized during the period they were with us. The boys and girls of those periods, now mostly married with families of their own, look back to, and always speak in glowing terms of the glorious summer days they had in camp at the Gully Soda Lake or Cook's Lake. Memories such as these are things to cherish.

Teachers during the years were as follows:

Mr. L. La Ruez  
Miss G. Milloy  
Miss L. Thompson,  
Mr. B. McDougall  
Mr. R. McGregor  
Mr. W. S. Holmes,  
Mr. R. M. Kines  
Mrs. A. Jones  
Mrs. Quarton  
Miss J. D. Floyd  
Miss J. Field  
Mr. J. C. Joslyn  
Mr. M. N. Carr  
Mr. K. R. Dickenson  
Mr. A. S. McPhail  
Miss J. B. McPhail  
Miss I. V. Blue  
Miss McLaren  
Mr. S. B. McLean  
Mr. M. Tuck  
Miss Dougan  
Miss Wilson  
Miss D. Browne  
Mr. L. R. Roberts  
Mrs. G. Keith  
Mrs. M. Sloan  
Mrs. J. M. Mead  
Mrs. H. Lee.  
Mrs. G. M. Hodgson

Miss Betty Roy  
Miss M. Chapman  
Miss A. Mealey.



A recent picture of Rev. and Mrs. Charles Barnes.

# CHAPTER NINE

## Board of Trustees

**H**ISTORY of the district would not be complete without a record of this important body. It is they who have full authority in the management and running of the school. To them the business of appointment of teachers and other officials, also the matter of finance to meet the necessary expenditures, in fact, the welfare and conduct of school affairs in every particular, and all this without remuneration of any kind. Mostly the work of the Board was of a routine and pleasant nature, but sometimes discord would creep into the matter of school affairs, then for the Board it would be a case of more kicks than hap-pence.

The district has usually been well served regarding the personnel of the Board of Trustees and many of our good citizens have served from time to time on that body. Always in the early years there was never any trouble in finding candidates to fill any vacancies that might occur. However, of late years there has been some difficulty in this regard, and looking back, it is a matter of much credit to our old pioneers and early settlers, that they always had the welfare of school affairs so much at heart.

During our career as a School District the Board has had to look to the provision of the school building in the spring of 1908 at a cost of \$750.00 and a further expenditure of \$250.00 for equipment, payments which were met from the proceeds of a \$1,000.00 debenture, the repayment of which was duly met. This layout, with necessary expenditures for upkeep, did duty for 19 years, when in 1927, major alterations were undertaken at a cost of \$2,200.00, payment being made from the proceeds of a debenture sold to the Local Government Board at a premium of \$7.00 and interest at 5 3/4 %. Mr. McMurphy, of Mervin, Sask., was the contractor. The work consisted of full size concrete basement, the moving of school building onto same. The modernizing of the school as regards windows, etc., the addition of cloak rooms, and the installing of indoor toilets, furnace and soft water tank.

Installed thus and still doing duty, it says much for the material and workmanship in that 1908 building.

Some few years later (1940) a teacherage was added to the layout



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

and in 1945 a drilled well 100 feet deep, with good water supply was provided.

All these things, along with the seasonal preparations and repairs, keeping school running, and now the great difficulty of finding and hiring a teacher, means much time, work and thought by the Board. They certainly deserve our best thanks and loyal support.

In the matter of officials, Fartown has seen fewer changes than most school districts. Our first secretary-treasurer was William Walker, who resigned at the end of 1909, to accept the position of secretary-treasurer to the newly formed Municipality of Wilton, No. 472, early in 1910. It was at that time at the request of the Board that the writer accepted this appointment but did not seek re-election as a member of the Board. From then on to the end of 1948, this office was held by the writer, through good times and bad, and notwithstanding the many changes in the personnel of the Board, and the fact that it is an annual appointment, I did have the confidence of the successive Boards, a record of which any one could be proud.

A total of 20 ratepayers have served as Trustees during the period 1907 to 1948 inclusive and are as follows:

## TRUSTEES

Mr. A. Elson	3½ years	Mr. E. Rowbottom	1 year
Mr. G. Firth	2 years	Mr. Y. Rhydderch	6 years
Mr. C. Watts	3 years	Mr. F. Sharp	15 years
Mr. F. Holden	9½ years	Mrs. K. Turtle	6 years
Mr. W. A. Sharp	4 years	Mr. J. Rowbottom	9 years
Mr. F. Rowbottom	11 years	Mr. B. Elson	4¼ years
Mr. W. Firth	9 years	Mr. E. Firth	2¼ years
Mr. A. Scharf	5 years	Mr. P. Christensen	3¾ years
Mr. S. Noyes	16¾ years	Mr. E. A. Lucas	5 years
Mr. W. Hodgson	6 years	Mr. J. Firth	5½ years

## CHAIRMEN DURING THE 42 YEARS

Mr. A. Elson	2 years	Mr. Y. Rhydderch	2 years
Mr. S. Noyes	2 years	Mr. J. Rowbottom	6¾ years
Mr. A. Scharf	2 years	Mr. E. Firth	2¼ years
Mr. F. Holden	3 years	Mr. E. A. Lucas	5 years
Mr. W. Firth	9 years		
Mr. F. Sharp	8 years		

Total 42 years

During this 42 years upwards of 520 meetings were held, and the writer only missed one and on that occasion I was in hospital recovering from an operation.

# CHAPTER TEN

## The Church and Social Organizations

THE spiritual needs of the district have always been well looked after by the Anglican Church, for, like many other communities, one of the first thoughts of the settlers was for a place of worship. In the earliest days until this was accomplished services were held in private homes and primitive as these homes may have been, the services thus held were always most sincere, devotional and inspiring.

Many of these services were held at the home of my parents (Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Elson), and one service that stands out conspicuously in my memory, was on a Sunday morning when the service was taken by Bishop Newnham.

The first church (Holy Trinity) was built early in 1908 by volunteer labour and funds from the Old Land. Work was started on January 2nd, 1908, and progressed as weather conditions permitted, and was dedicated and opened for service at an early date.

On the evening of Thursday, June 27th, 1912, the church and barn were completely destroyed by the cyclone that passed through the centre of our district on that date. Fortunately our school withstood the onslaught of that terrible storm, and services were held at the school for some considerable time.

Funds were again made available from the Old Land through the efforts of Archdeacon Noyes. The church was rebuilt, and it was dedicated and reopened for service on July 14th, 1914, by Bishop Dewdney.

Fartown was within the parish of Marshall and this south side of the parish was for some few years, in charge of Ven. Archdeacon Noyes, who had spent about 30 years in the ministry in England and Ireland. He was a well liked man and was always spoken of affectionately as "the Archdeacon" and both he and Mrs. Noyes were beloved and respected by all who knew them. They were the parents of Sam and Herbert Noyes, two of our Barr Colonist pioneers, and of R. J. Noyes. Herbert Noyes, alas, was one of the boys who "did not come back" from World War I.

The church is now within the Lashburn field having been so since the Marshall incumbency became vacant.

The church and cemetery are located on the south west corner of the South West Quarter of Section 2 Township 48, range 27 west of the 3rd Meridian, the site being donated by the late William Walker. Owing to its location the church fills the needs of a rural population covering a wide area, and in its cemetery many of our pioneers of the surrounding territory are laid to rest.

Bearing out my earlier statement that it is high time someone committed to paper the origin and history of our community it is significant to note that of the six adults who pioneered on this section 2, five have found their last rest at this spot on the prairie, as, has one of the pioneer children of these families. Also two other pioneers of our Fartown district are buried within the confines of this hallowed spot. The names of these eight pioneers are: Mr. G. Firth and Mrs. G. Firth, Mr. W. Firth and Mrs. W. Firth, Mrs. Wm. Walker and daughter, Gladys, Miss Sarah Elson, Mrs. W. T. Page.

They are all at rest in the spot they knew so well, but our memory of them lingers on through the years.

From the records of the church we learn that Bishop Newnham held a confirmation service at the church on July 31st, 1911, assisted by Archdeacon Noyes, when a good number of our pioneer young folk were confirmed.

The story of our Fartown Church is largely the story of the life of our old friend Mr. W. T. Page. The services and the upkeep of the church and grounds have always been his faithful care, and as one of the wardens, throughout all the years his services have been outstanding. Truly a good and faithful servant of the Church.

Turning now to the conventional social affairs. From early on our women folk particularly did have organizations or societies of their own for a goodly number of years, and were responsible for many of our social events during their existence. However these have gradually faded out, chiefly owing to the modern means of travel and the consequent ability to get into town for these amenities. The W.A. and Red Cross did hold on for a long period but lately the Red Cross seems to be the only one to survive the modern trend, with means of transport to urban centres so easily and swiftly accomplished. Likewise our men folk from the pioneer days had a strong branch of the old Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association and this remained in existence for a long period of years. It was a real community organization and its regular fortnightly

meetings were always well attended, until its later stages when it gradually faded out, as did the parent body. Since then nothing has taken its place locally, and like many things of a like nature, it is easier to get into the urban centres for stronger support and a better prospect of continuity.



This is Ralph Johnson with his four oxen hitched to the binder, but the crop does look rather light.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## Some Ex-Pupils

**I**N these days of teacher shortage, it is interesting to note what our ex-pupils are doing in this regard. At the present time there are two teaching in Saskatchewan and one in British Columbia, these being Douglas Floyd, Marge Sharp and Margaret Chapman.

Perhaps the most outstanding advance in the educational world is that made by Jack Bicknell, who since graduating from the University of Alberta with a B. ScA. degree, has been engaged in scholastic affairs in the State of Iowa. At the time of this writing Jack is Director of Educational Research for the Educational Association of Iowa, with headquarters at Des Moines, Iowa. Jack was a speaker at a recent Educational Convention at Washington, D.C., and arising from that came an invitation to speak at a conference of educational authorities at Chicago.

Jack, when at Fartown, was a rather carefree student with an ability to absorb knowledge easily, and it is pleasing to note his advancement to the top of his profession, his most recent achievement being his Ph. D. degree, something of which he and his people may well be proud. Here is Jack's standing in the scholastic world at the moment: Dr. J. Bicknell, B.S.A., B.Ed., M.Ed., Ph.D. You can find all about Jack in the current edition of "Who's Who". Truly a fine record and we of Fartown congratulate Jack on his great success, it is an honor to himself, to his parents, and to the district where he received his early education.

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## Ex-Pupils and War Service

IN connection with World Wars I and II it is worthy of note that our ex-pupils were in no way lax in patriotism to their country, as is shown by the two plaques hanging in the school room:

World War I records the services of:

George E. Sharpe,  
Jack Rowbottom

Harry Wilford  
Ernest Wilford

World War II records the following:

J. Bicknell  
D. Christensen  
W. Craig  
B. Elson  
E. Firth  
R. Firth  
D. Floyd  
R. Floyd

H. Hanson  
L. Hanson  
R. Harris  
W. Minnick  
E. Noyes  
S. Noyes  
W. Noyes

E. Reid  
L. Reid  
W. Reid  
R. Ruttan  
W. Turtle  
H. Wilford  
D. Young  
R. Young

### IN LOVING MEMORY

E. W. Chapman

W. F. Jans

L. E. Turtle

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## Local Taxing Authorities

**D**URING the years prior to 1910 local taxes were somewhat limited.

Up to and including 1905 the nominal tax that we were assessed had to be forwarded to Regina. This tax was two dollars per year per quarter section. Compare this with today's local taxes and you will see the justification for the term "nominal." Early in 1906 our "Local Improvement District No. 24" was formed and Mr. W. Saunders was elected councillor for the territory of which we were part. Mr. Alec Nicol was chairman, Mr. Stanley Hall of the Wirral District was secretary-treasurer, and the headquarters were at Lashburn.

For my information Mr. Saunders looked up his first receipt for taxes paid to this L.I.D. It is dated 1906 and was for the sum of two dollars, so our taxes under the new authority can still be stated as nominal.

The L.I.D.'s authority and activities were somewhat limited and their taxing authority was confined to their own needs. During the four years of their existence, their activities were mainly the marking out of road allowances and the opening up of same, and some little pioneer work in the way of road building. In our own territory the early work consisted mainly of plowing the road as a preliminary for road construction and also as a fireguard against the frequent prairie fires.

Previous to this we, of course, had nothing but trails for our limited travel. We would each have our individual trail to a neighboring farm and from there pick up theirs, and so on until hitting a main trail which, of course, had become existant through this procedure.

Early on these trails were only lightly marked and whilst travel over them in the daylight was simple and easy to follow, it was a far different proposition on a dark and stormy night, and many a tale of being lost and stranded on the prairie could be told by the old timers.

One such incident that I recall happened to a very good friend and neighbor of mine. The details follow: It was late in the summer and the days getting shorter; the nights correspondingly longer. He had occasion to make a trip to town (Lloydminster) but his business took more time than he had expected. Consequently it was getting on to evening when he got hitched up to the wagon and on his way home.

On top of this the weather was threatening and looked very stormy. It would be a dark night for there was no moon, and the last few miles would be across prairie with only the light trail of his own wagon wheel marks. He left Lloydminster by the mail trail, but it would be getting dark by the time he reached the spot where he had to turn off. This, of course, was so but he managed to get a glimpse now and then of his own lightly marked trail for a mile or more. Meanwhile the clouds were getting more heavy and ominous and soon in the pitch darkness all trace of the trail was lost. He hoped to catch a glimpse of a light somewhere but he had no such luck, after travelling for what seemed to him to be hours, he finally decided he had missed home and was now at least a couple of miles past it. After pondering the matter for awhile he dismissed his first thoughts of turning and trying to retrace some of the distance, for then he would be hopelessly lost. He finally came to the conclusion that it would be best to stay where he was and wait for morning light. He unhitched and unharnessed the horses, hobbled them to keep them from straying too far away, and got into the wagon to spend the night under the cover of what rugs he had, as best he could. The black and ominous clouds soon began to spit rain and in a short while it got faster and faster until it was pouring down as never before. The wagon box now became untenable and he perforce had to take refuge under the wagon. What a long and dreary night, raining in torrents, and long before morning light he was cold and wet to the skin. At the first streak of dawn he was out from his miserable cover to see if he could recognize anything of his surroundings. The reader will readily imagine his chagrin when he saw his horses not 50 yards away feeding at his own haystack, and there was the shack only a few yards further on, where the wife had been sitting up all night with the lamp in the window worrying as to what had happened. If our friend had only gone another 100 yards he would have seen the light for he was on the blind side of the shack where there was no window.

Again something to laugh at and joke about now; but at the time what an experience to undergo, and something that could be duplicated many, many times in the memories of our sturdy pioneers.

Now back to taxing authorities. As already stated the L.I.D. were only enabled to tax for their own needs, and had nothing to do with our schools. Consequently our schools at this period were their own



taxing authority and also did their own collecting of same. This procedure, of course, ended when our Municipality of Wilton-472, came into being, early in 1910, and from that date on they have been our only taxing authority for all local purposes.

The work of our Municipal Council throughout the years is well known and is outside the scope of these reminiscences, but in passing it may be permissible to say that the writer did do service as a councillor for a period in the early days of its formation. Also on the formation of the Municipality in 1910, it was Mr. Wm. Walker, (who had been our school district secretary-treasurer for three years) whom they chose to be their secretary-treasurer, a position he had filled with much success for a period of 27 years when he retired in 1936.

# CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## Miscellaneous Stories

**F**ROM these reminiscences you will have gathered that in those early days of settlement there was no such thing as roads or fences, and with more than every other section being wild land and the open state of the territory, it is easy for the reader to conceive how at times it was possible for settlers to get lost in a storm or on a dark night, even when close to home. I have told of some of this in a previous chapter, but I think I should tell of some of these incidents in a chapter to itself, incidents that came directly under my own observation and with which I had some connection. On many occasions our little log shack did prove a "tower of refuge" for lost individuals and did save much suffering, and perhaps life itself, in at least three cases. For that reason I think they are worth recording, and will perhaps be interesting to the readers of these reminiscences.

The first concerns an old homesteader friend and close neighbor, Charlie Watts. It was on in January, very cold (30 below) and quite deep snow. He had been visiting at the home of Mr. G. Firth and spent the evening playing bridge. It was soon after ten o'clock that he left to walk home just one mile across the school section. It was a very dark night, and Charlie's eyesight poor, and he always had to wear glasses. Consequently he was soon in difficulties for his trail was only just a foot trail. He had only gone about half a mile when he lost the trail completely, and in his efforts to regain it, he got lost for certain. It was hard trudging through the snow, but he kept on hoping to come up with some surroundings that would be familiar. On he tramped for what seemed hours, and it really was hours too. He turned to one side or another many times to what loomed up and looked like a shack, only to find it was just another clump of willows. He was praying now for some friendly light to show up as he was fast playing out and couldn't keep up the tramp much longer.

I well remember that it was Friday night for after the wife and children had gone to bed I sat up to do quite a spell of writing to friends in the Old Land and have the letters ready for posting on our Saturday trip to town. It was late when I finished, being after 2 a.m. o'clock, so I made myself a cup of cocoa before getting ready for bed. Then I made

up the fire put out the light and got into bed. However before I could lay down I heard something or someone stumble at the door. I called out to ask who was there, and a very weak voice answered: "Can you tell me where I am?" I recognized the voice and said "You are not far from home, Charlie, I'll be at the door in a moment." As I opened the door he fell into my arms and almost knocked me over. I got him into the room with some difficulty but still on his feet. He had been tramping over four hours through deep snow and 30 below weather and was really all in. However, after a hot drink and a bite to eat he was soon O.K., excepting that he was very weary. A good rest and breakfast at sunrise and he was able to make home quite easily. Here I should say that we had windows in the shack on the south, east and west sides, and the lamp on the table always did show through all three, Charlie saw the light from our west window as he came over a rise just west of the shack. He had struggled on and had almost made it when the light suddenly disappeared. That was when I put it out to get into bed. Fortunately he was so close he could not miss the shack and the noise I had heard was when he had attempted to knock on the door, he had stumbled and fell up against it. Really our little shack, if not "heaven" was sure a "haven" to our old friend, Charlie, that night.

Another of these incidents concerned Mrs. Osborne, a neighbor of Charlie Watt's, on the adjoining quarter section. She, too, had been visiting at the home of the George Firth family, and she also left at about 10 o'clock on the same foot trail. This was also on a Friday night. My reason for knowing this was because of how the incident ended, and this I learned the following morning (Saturday) when I made my trip to town.

Snow was quite deep, the night dark and the temperature 25 below. It was close to midnight when we were getting ready for bed. As usual in those days I got the stable lantern and went to the barn to see that everything was O.K. On my way back to the shack I heard a cry in the distance but paid no attention at the moment. After getting in the shack and putting out the lantern, I suddenly thought "Could that cry have been human?" I mentioned the matter to my wife who immediately said "Get the lantern again and go out, it might be someone lost and in distress, who caught the glimmer of your lantern." I did this and immediately heard the same cry, but it seemed a long way to the west.

I went on in the direction of the cry and soon ascertained it came

from a woman in distress. I now hurried on and almost a half mile west I came onto Mrs. Osborne, a close neighbor and a very dear friend of my wife. She, too, like Charlie Watts, had lost the trail on the school section, and had been struggling on for over two hours. She had caught a sight of the lantern light when I was between the house and barn, and it was then that I had heard the cry.

Now, she was really played out and it took me a long time to get her to the house, but she soon recovered from the effects of her ordeal. We talked things over and figured that Harry, her husband, would be out looking for her; the outcome being that I would hitch up the bulls and take her home, it would save Harry some worrying anyway.

I got the bulls hitched up, packed and covered up Mrs. Osborne with all the rugs we had, to keep her snug and warm, and away we went under protest from the bulls, who continually tried to turn round and make back home. A half mile from the Osborne home we met up with Billy Hodgson, with his drivers and cutter, and on his way home. As his trail was past the Osborne place he offered to take her the rest of the way and it would save me a lot of time. This was a slice of luck for me, but was it lucky for Billy? Well, we shall see.

With Mrs. Osborne packed up again, this time with Billy, my bulls didn't heed turning round for they had already done that on their own, and we were off for home.

Saturday morning I went to town as usual but hadn't been there long when I saw Billy coming in on the trail with the team and sleighs and something loaded up, which looked like his cutter. I went and met him just as he reached the blacksmith shop. One look and I didn't have to ask what had happened. Close to where I had left them on the dividing line down the middle of the section was a huge rock. It still sits there today at the fence. I had only just left them; the team had been a bit restless and for the moment when starting up Billy had forgotten about the rock. Too late, he found his team had straddled the rock, then "plunk" and the cutter was wrecked. From there on Billy led the team and Mrs. Osborne walked along with him. I asked what about Harry, was he out looking for Mrs. Osborne? "No," says Billy "The blighter was in bed, fast asleep, and snoring away to beat the band!"

Who says Friday is not an unlucky day? When Billy reads this story it will remind him that he did make some late night trips home away back in his courting days.

Here is another little story, the ending strange, maybe, but also very true.

One of our first grain elevator men at Marshall (and I believe he was the first) was C. Wilson who came here from Radisson, where he had a farm. He, like we, had bulls for power on the farm, but now with his elevator job, he thought he would dispose of the farm. Learning that we were looking for another team, he offered us a team of his at a very reasonable price. We in turn offered to take them providing they were up to his description and if he could deliver them at Marshall. That was O.K. with him, he had a Frenchman named John—something or other, on the farm and he would write to him and tell him to bring the bulls along on the trail. This he did and John drove the bulls here hitched to a buggy.

There was no bridge at Battleford then, and being late in the fall the ferry was out and no one had dared to cross the ice as yet! This, however, did not deter John. It was glare ice, just like glass, but he had a number of oat sheaves piled and strapped on the back of the buggy. He laid these ahead and stepped up the oxen onto them and had just enough so that as the team moved forward he could bring the back sheaves up front again. It took him about a half day of this slow progress to get across the river, with the ice dipping and swaying with every movement. What a risk, but he made it safely, but Tom and Jerry were a pretty scared team on that part of the journey. It took him about six days to reach Lashburn, where he arrived at supper time. He put up the team in the livery barn, fed them, but after supper learning that it was only about nine miles to Marshall he decided to hit the trail (we had no roads) and finish his journey. It was a dark night and coming over the track he took the trail running straight west instead of the one alongside of the track. This, of course, brought him to the Wirral District, and when the trail got less distinct he soon got lost.

My brother was away at Marshall late that night and it very black with heavy clouds. We had the stable lantern hung up on the flagpole at the back of the shack as a beacon. When my brother came along he let down the lantern and brought it into the house.

Now, it seemed that that light had also been a beacon for John with the team of bulls and he had been making a beeline for it for some time. However, he was some considerable distance away when he saw

the light lowered and then suddenly disappear. By good luck or good judgment, he did manage to hold on his course and came up to our hay stack at the back of the barn. He left the team there, found the shack, but as he approached it from the back he failed to see any light. We heard someone groping about at the back, we went out and found him feeling along to find a door. We asked him in, and he told us he wanted to make Marshall. We told him he would have difficulty in doing that for ours was only a lightly worn trail and he had already been lost. He could stay the night with us if he cared to and make Marshall in daylight in the morning. He then asked us if we knew Wilson, the elevator man, and said he had a team of oxen out at our hay stack. We told him then that he had sure struck it lucky for we were the people who had bought this team from Wilson. He decided he had better stop the night and the next morning walked into Marshall and found Wilson at breakfast. After the morning greetings Wilson said "Well, where is the team?" John said "Down at Elson's". Wilson said "What do you know about Elson's," John said, "Well that's where I delivered them last night. I have walked from there this morning, and they will be coming into town with them this afternoon." It does seem strange that after their long journey on the trail they should get lost in the last few miles, then to wander on to the farm which was to be their home for the rest of their days. Tom and Jerry were a grand team and did do a tremendous lot of work for us.

Incidents such as the foregoing, if they happened in the summer wouldn't be too bad, but in the winter it is a serious situation and could easily be tragic. I could give several more of these stories in which we and our little log shack did lend some succor but I think I will wind up this chapter with another incident which concerns one of our bachelor friends, but with which I had no part.

It was a bitter cold night and our friend had been over to a neighbor's not far away. He stayed late and when he essayed to make home the wind had arisen and snow and drifting snow was obliterating his trail. He was on foot and he had much difficulty in keeping the trail. In fact he soon lost it and in his endeavours to regain it was soon completely lost. On he went in what he hoped was the direction of home. After some considerable time he came up against a hay stack and being somewhat exhausted he took shelter from the wind on the lee side. As

he stood there he thought it might be all right to pull out hay until he had a hole big enough to lay in for shelter. This he did and crawled into his little cave. After awhile, however, the wind changed and his shelter was no good any longer. He was, of course, compelled to evacuate his now miserable shelter, and being very stiff and cold, he again essayed the task of finding home. On he tramped for a long, long time, but his task was in vain. Again, he came up to a hay stack and, being very weary walking through the snow, he figured it wouldn't be too long before it became daylight, so he would pull another hole here under the wind and crawl in. This he did and though it was bitterly cold, it was out of the wind and was some shelter. At the first streak of dawn, he was out of the hole and on his feet again. He walked around the stack, and, yes, you guessed it, it was the same stack he had made the first hole in, and what is more, it was his own hay stack, and there was the shack not so very many yards away.

# FINIS

**A**ND so we have come to the end of this little jaunt back to the origin and settlement of our local community. Of our pioneers and their doings from 1903 and on. Of the influx of settlers with the coming of the railway in 1906, and the formation of our school district in 1907.

We have covered the years from the time of the slow and patient oxen, to this day of mechanism and the diesel tractor. But even in these days of car, tractor and plane, it is well to look back to days gone by when travel was not so swift and when we did all our field work in the daylight, and did not require headlights on our oxen—and that reminds me to tell you one other little story of the early days—One of our newer settlers had bought a team of oxen not well broken or trained, and he made poor progress that first summer. During the winter he got an additional team, and talking to him one day I said "With that four ox team you should do a lot of breaking next summer." His reply was "Wait until Spring — I'll make the 'sods fly' " I never did figure out if it were the oxen or the prairie sod that he was going to make fly.

And now adieu, for —

We've looked back to the great rolling prairie

The oxen, the log shack and all,

The days of those pioneer friendships

And memories so sweet to-recall:

Now speed seems to be the main factor,

And miles we can cover. Ah well,

Now the kids having far distant pleasures

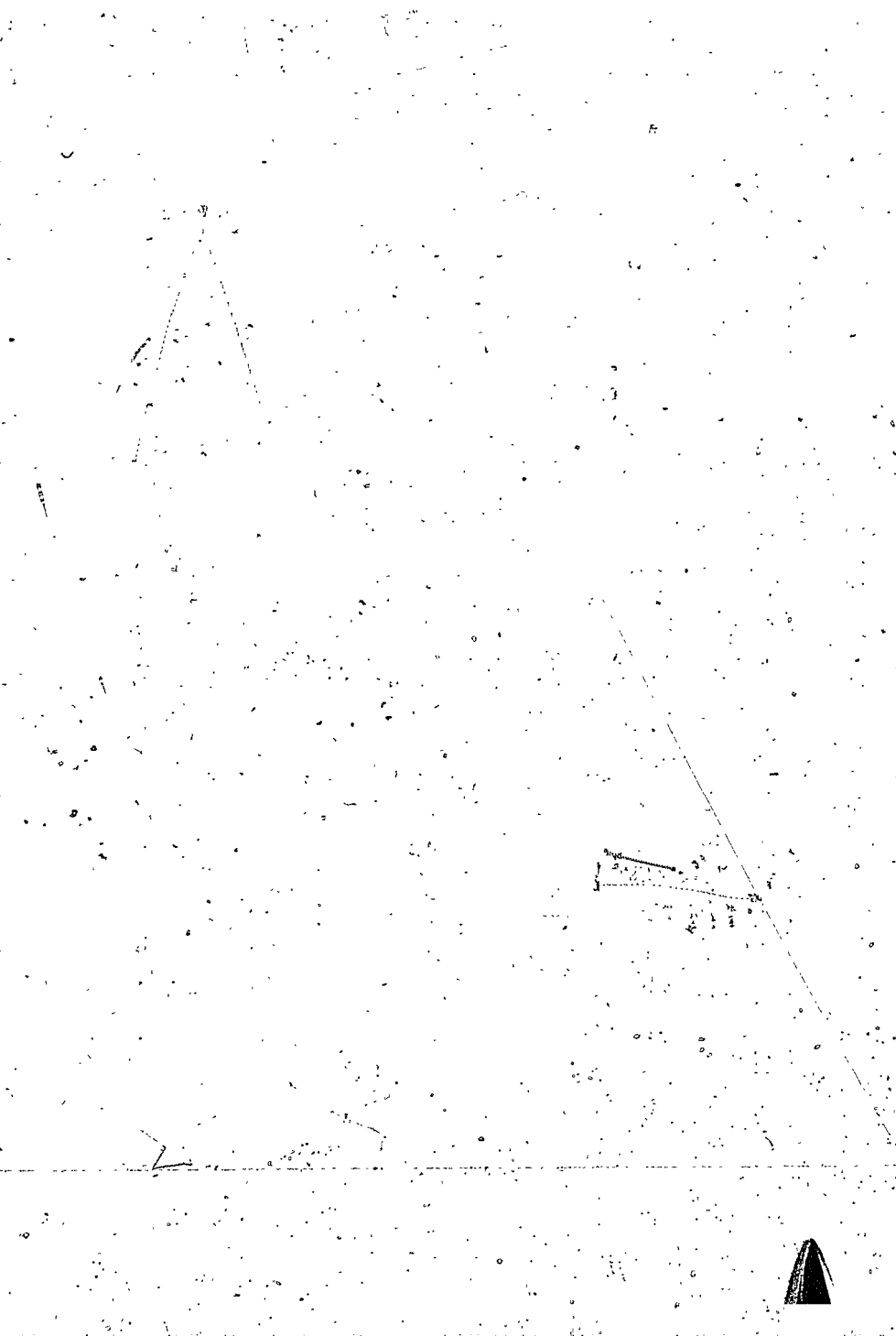
Get the car out and travel like h—



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# RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF WILTON

No. 472

## Matters of Interest from the Past . .

Municipality was organized in 1910 and first regular meeting of the Council was held on 1st January, 1910.

First Reeve was J. T. Eliot and the first Councillors were W. B. Buckmaster, E. Hale, J. A. Ruttan, B. A. Carruthers, W. J. Steenson and H. Burke.

First Secretary, William Walker.

First Auditor, G. G. Morris of Lashburn.

Municipal Office erected in Marshall, and first meeting held there in March 1913.

In 1913 Road Work wages were as follows:

Single man: 25c per hour, Wheelers and snatch teams 50c per hour

Slush scrapers: 40c per hour and Foreman 40c per hour.

In 1913 Municipal Tax Rate was Six (6) cents per acre.

First Tax Collector was appointed in 1913.

Municipality was established as a pure bred sire area in May 1934 but this excluded boars and rams.

William Walker retired as Secretary-Treasurer in 1936 after 27 years service and Fred N. Lonsdale was appointed in his stead.

In 1936 owing to scarcity of feed and low prices for cattle, the Council organized the shipment of canner cattle from the municipality at an average price of one cent per pound, many of the animals not realising the freight charges.

In 1938 Council approved a Hospital Bylaw prescribing a levy of 2 mills on all assessed land in the municipality with a minimum of \$5.00.

Also in 1938 grasshoppers were prevalent in the municipality and a grasshopper bait station was opened in Marshall.

Just a few items gleaned from the municipal records.

Keep in touch with your local Councillor

and

Support Your Municipal Council.